

PAUL COATES

Attack on Braden Held Blackmail

You won't find much argument against the boast that California has the nation's most effective school system.

It's a clear matter of record that our kids rate high above the general qualifying average in colleges and universities throughout the United States.

The reason is simple enough. It isn't the weather out here that creates brighter kids. It's the teachers. We pay more and we get a far better quality of educator than other states. Our past governors, both Republican and Democratic, have given priority to education with the result that we've got a system unmatched in history.

And yet, our healthy pre-occupation with the teaching of our children is being seriously threatened by the ultra-conservatives or the extremists or whatever you choose to call them.

They have made education a target of their vicious attention.

The latest and most astonishing right-wing tactic is the invention of that strange group called the "Citizens' Committee of California." As you read, they've threatened to block a \$260 million school bond issue on the November ballot.

Don't be sure they can't do it, either. They are little known, but are apparently quite powerful in their political manipulations.

The co-chairman of the group, a James Townsend of Orange, says there are 35,000 members who are all "dedicated conservatives and taxpayers."

At the moment, the object of this disaffection is Tom Braden, president of

the State Board of Education.

Braden has been in a widely publicized tug-of-war with Max Rafferty, superintendent of public instruction, and the citizens' committee of California is pulling on Max's side.

According to Townsend: "Braden has been rocking the boat long enough. Now we intend to sink it or him."

If Gov. Brown doesn't fire Braden, the group will make a concentrated effort to defeat the school bond issue.

"We'd like to know," Townsend asks, "if Gov. Brown can afford a \$260 million controversial president of the State Board of Education under this kind of pressure."

And I'd like to know what it is about Tom Braden that has made him such an object of revulsion to the right-wing. They constantly hint, without putting it into so many words, that he's a commie dupe.

But Braden doesn't fit the picture. He's not a wild-eyed liberal. His

even say, is quite the opposite. For a number of years he served as direct assistant to Allen Dulles in the CIA. Later, he headed a division of that agency. He's been nominated as a trustee of Dartmouth College and he has a "Q" clearance, which is the highest security clearance given by the government.

When Dulles was out here some time ago, he asked me about the "trouble" Braden was having. He was astounded to hear about it and told me that he considered his former assistant "one of the most reliable men I ever worked with."

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So I cannot understand why they pick such an unlikely candidate for their labels and their fury. But I'm not really worried about Tom Braden. He's a big, capable boy and he can take care of himself.

What I am worried about is the real victim of this attack — the school child who may be denied adequate education in the future.

To use the threat of destroying a school bond issue if they don't get Braden's scalp, is blackmail of the most cynical



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